



STATUS OF MAMMALS IN THE SOUTHAMPTON AREA

By P Budd
And Southampton Wildlife Link

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INTRODUCTION

The Southampton Wildlife Link has decided to produce a report on the mammalian fauna of the Southampton area because, to our knowledge, nobody has done so previously and it was thought that it would be a useful exercise to do so. We consider that the main purpose of this report is to bring together information on the distribution of mammal species currently available to the Link and in so doing, inform both the general public, and those with the responsibility over the green areas of the city, of the diversity of mammal species present. In addition we hope to promote more interest and further recording of mammals, and other wildlife, within the city boundaries.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INSECTIVORA

HEDGEHOG (*Erinaceus europaeus*):-

Very widespread and usually common in most of the suburbs of Southampton, especially in gardens. The majority of records are from the Maybush/Coxford area; Bassett and Bitterne/Thornhill/Sholing. No records for inner city areas; the closest to the centre of town being Regents Park (in the west); Southampton Common (in the centre) and Peartree Green (in the east). Around the city there are records for Lower Test; Lord's Wood; Bursledon; Hamble and Netley. However, at Netley, it appears to be absent from West Wood and rarely seen at Victoria Country Park. Gaps in its distribution around the edge of the city may be explained by predation by Badgers in some areas. Also the Hedgehog seems to be subject to periodic variations in numbers, for example it was frequently seen in the period 1983 to 1986 and again in 1994 to 1997 but was rarer in the period between.

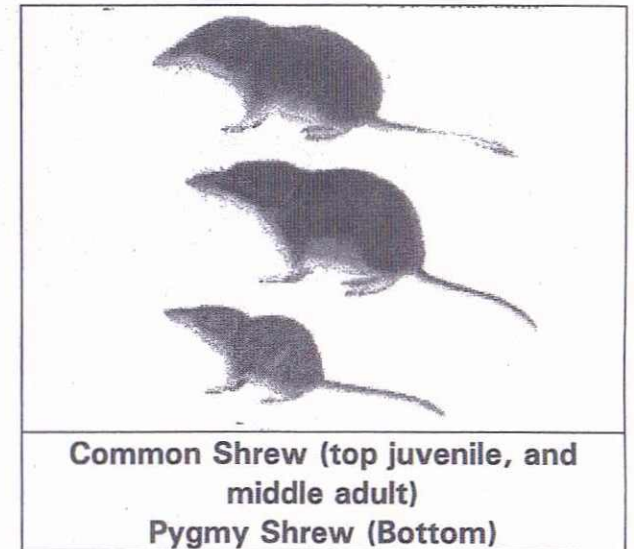
MOLE (*Talpa europaea*):-

Unlike the Hedgehog the Mole is not an animal frequently seen in small suburban gardens but like it there are no records in the inner city parts of Southampton. It prefers the deep, peaty soils and ready supply of worms to be found in river and stream valleys and is particularly common at Lower Test Reserve; Shoreburs Greenway and in the Itchen Valley. There are also recent records from major woodland areas around the city such as Lord's Wood; Botley Manor Country Park; West Wood and in the Allington Lane area. Additionally there are old (1960s) records from Dibden Bay and Nursling Gravel Pits.

COMMON SHREW (*Sorex araneus*):-

Widespread and probably common in most areas around the city where there is significant scrub and tall grasses but seldom seen except when trapping for mammals or as cat kills.

The only recent suburban garden record that we have is from Fitzroy Close, Bassett (1995).



It seems to be absent from much of the eastern suburbs including such places as Netley Common, Hum Hole and Peartree Green and most common in the south-east (including Shoreburs); the Itchen Valley area; the Test Valley and in the Lord's Wood area. There is even a recent record (1998) from the Sports Centre. I have no record for Southampton Common since 1980, when it was

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recorded in the Old Cemetery.

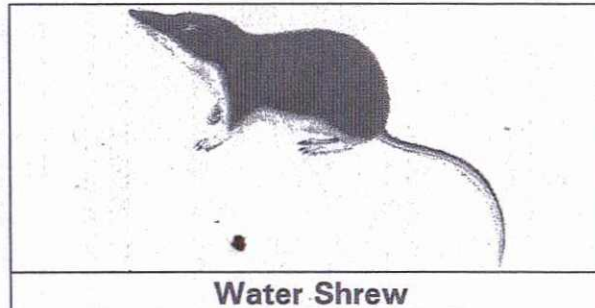
PYGMY SHREW (*Sorex minutus*):-

This is the smallest mammal to be found in the Southampton area. This species has similar habitat requirements to the Common Shrew but appears to be much rarer around Southampton. Most recent records are from the south-east including Shoreburs, West Wood and, possibly, Victoria Country Park. It was present around Mansbridge Reservoir up to at least 1987 and still in the Old Cemetery on Southampton Common in 1979. There are no garden records and no records in the west since the 1960s.

WATER SHREW (*Neomys fodiens*)

The Water Shrew, as its name suggests, is an aquatic mammal. However, in the Southampton area, it seems to be confined to the main river valley sites, namely Lower Test Reserve and the Itchen Valley up river from Woodmill and including the area around Mansbridge Reservoir. There

are very recent records for both of these areas and the only additional old record is for Nursling Gravel Pits (1964).



Water Shrew

CHIROPTERA (Bats)

Bats, being nocturnal and able to fly, pose special problems when it comes to identification and recording of species. Additionally the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 mean that it is illegal to disturb bats at their roosts, capture them and have them in the hand without a special license. It goes without saying that such provisions are essential requirements if bats are to be properly protected in this country, however successful identifications can only be made by those with special permission to handle them or

by use of a bat detector. Bats produce sounds that are ultra-sonic, i.e. mostly beyond the range of human hearing, but a detector can pick up these sounds and convert them into something that can be heard. Some species can then be identified with a degree of certainty. Nevertheless there is some doubt regarding the identification of most of the rarer species around the city, hence the use of square brackets in the accounts below. Also it has been considered wise, for various reasons, to exclude reference to roost sites from the species accounts.

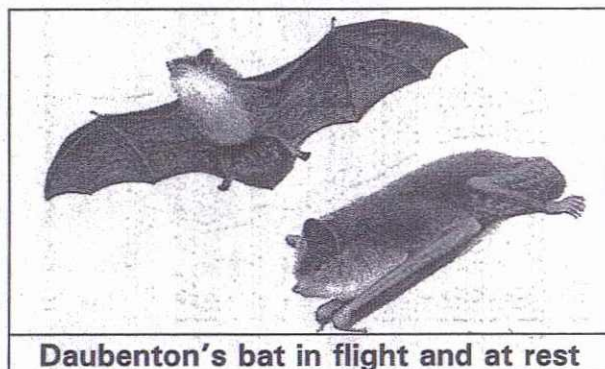
[GREATER HORSESHOE BAT (*Rhinolophus ferrumeguinum*)]:-

There are just two, rather doubtful, 1966 records from Nursling GPs and Lord's Wood. As far as is known these specimens were not caught in the hand. In fact there are very few recent records from anywhere in Hampshire.

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DAUBENTON'S BAT (*Myotis daubentoni*):-

This is a common bat in river valleys in Hampshire, including the Southampton area. There are many records for Riverside Park; Mansbridge and Itchen Valley Country Park in particular. Elsewhere it has been frequently reported on Southampton Common up to at least 1985, when there was a daytime sighting of one over the Boating Lake. Without doubt, this species is under-recorded in the Test Valley with the most recent record being for Nursling GPs (1969).



Daubenton's bat in flight and at rest

[WHISKERED BAT (*Myotis mystacinus*)]:-

There are two, somewhat doubtful, records for Lord's Wood (1968) and Nursling GPs (1969). However the discovery of a dead bat, apparently of this species, in Nightingale Wood (1967) cannot be verified but makes it more likely that a population of this species existed to the NW of the city, at least in the 1960s. It must be noted that the current species is very difficult to separate from either the **BRANDT'S BAT** (*M.brandti*) or the **NATTERER'S BAT** (*M.natttereri*) except when in the hand. Both of these latter two species have not been reported around the city but could occur.

NOCTULE BAT (*Nyctalus noctula*):-

This is probably the second commonest species of bat in the Southampton area, judging by the records. There are recent (post-1990) records for several sites in the Itchen Valley area and also Lord's Wood; Southampton Common;

Eastleigh Airport; Weston; Badnam Copse at Bursledon and, probably, Netley. There are also records from a Thornhill garden (1983); Lower Test Reserve (1978) and Rownhams (1965).

[LEISLER'S BAT (*Nyctalus leisleri*)]:-

This is a rare bat in Britain but known to occur in Hampshire. Unfortunately the only Southampton record, for Townhill Park (1977) cannot be verified.

SEROTINE BAT (*Eptesicus serotinus*):-

This bat, and the Noctule, are the largest species to be found in the Southampton area. Also, along with the Pipistrelle and Brown Long Eared Bats, it is more likely to be found in buildings than the other species. In Britain the Serotine Bat is only common south of the M4 corridor and is probably under-recorded in the Southampton area. The best place to find it seems to be the area around Woodmill in the Itchen Valley. Also there are post-1990 records for

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Shirley Pond; Itchen Valley Country Park and Eastleigh Airport. Additionally there are older records for West End (1981); Fawley (1964) and Nursling GPs (1963).

PIPISTRELLE BAT (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*):-

The smallest, and obviously much the commonest, bat around Southampton. It is easier to list the places where it has not been recorded! There are post-1990 records throughout the city, even in inner city areas like Ocean Village (1991) and central Shirley (1995). It is a very frequent sight in suburban gardens but is apparently, much less frequent than formerly.



Pipistrelle bat in flight

In a Bitterne garden it has been recorded as early in the year as St. Valentine's Day (February 14th) and as late as Hallowe'en (October 31st). Around the edge of the city it is easiest to say that it has been found almost everywhere it has been looked for.

BROWN LONG-EARED BAT (*Plecotus auritus*):-

This is much the commoner of the two Long Eared Bat species in Britain and most records for the Southampton area have either been definitely identified as this species or assumed to be. However this bat only seems to be common around the edges of the city, indeed to our knowledge, there are no definite post-1990 records within the city even for Southampton Common. Post-1990 records for Long Eared Bat elsewhere have been made at Riverside Park; Mansbridge; West Wood; Victoria Country Park; Bursledon and Priors Hill Copse (Butlock's Heath). In the 1980's there were records from Lower Test Reserve and West End;

also recorded at Nursling GPs in 1969.

GREY LONG-EARED BAT (*Plecotus austriacus*):-

This is the rarest bat definitely known from the Southampton area. There is one record, for Lower Test Reserve (1978).



Grey long-eared bat

CARNIVORA

FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*):-

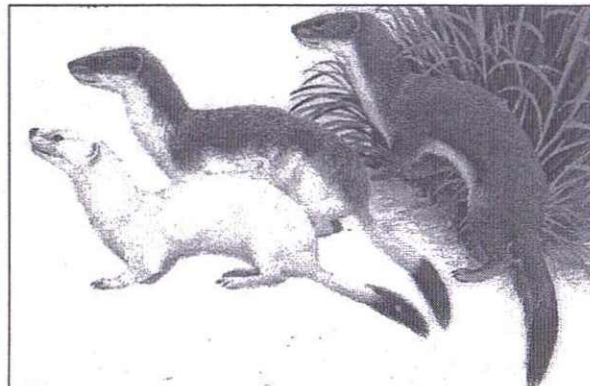
It is well known that this animal has adapted to life in British cities considerably better than any other carnivore, or indeed, most other wild mammals. It has achieved this by

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becoming a scavenger and an opportunist. According to one local naturalist it has gradually become commoner in the Bitterne area since 1970 and was rare there before this. Judging by the dated records there were no reports before 1965 when one was seen at Dowd's Farm, West End. Then there appears to be a concentration of records from the Bassett area in 1970/71 plus Southampton Common (1971) and Lord's Wood (1975). The earliest inner city record was for Banister's Road (1981); then from 1983 the number of sightings in the city increased sharply. Most sightings for a specific Bitterne garden dated from 1985, by which time it was already common to see foxes in the container docks. In 1986 it was certainly common to see fox signs in school grounds throughout the city, including inner areas. Since then there seems to have been a stable and high population of foxes throughout the city, especially in suburban areas where there are large gardens. In recent years it has become more common to see them in the day time.

STOAT (*Mustela erminea*):-

The Stoat is a major predator of Rabbits so it isn't surprising that they are now seldom seen in areas completely surrounded by housing. The only such place where they might still occur is on Southampton Common but to our knowledge there are no post-1980 records from here.



Stoat (left in its wintercoat for the north, middle is winter coat, and right is summer coat)

More surprising is that they seem to be absent from the wooded areas to the north of the city and much commoner to the west than to the east. Post-1975 sightings, including

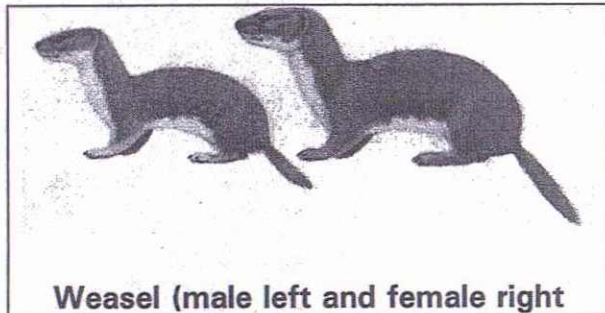
a 1998 record, have been centred on Nursling and Lee areas. Other post-1990 records have been for Dibden Bay and Lower Test Reserve in the west and Itchen Valley Country Park; West Wood and, possibly, Netley in the east. It appears that they only occur in low numbers at eastern sites. There are also old (1967) records for West End and Rownhams.

WEASEL (*Mustela nivalis*):-

The Weasel is the smallest British carnivorous mammal and it depends on a high population of small rodents in an area. Although such places occur in the Greenways Weasels seem to be absent from them probably because cat predation of their main food supply has wiped them out. The only place enclosed with housing that is still large enough to support a population is Southampton Common. Apparently Weasels have been reported there since 1990 but our most recent dated record is for 1979. Unlike the Stoat the Weasel appears to be more common on the eastern edges of the

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city than in the west. It is numerous at Victoria Country Park for example. Other post-1990 records are from West Wood and Itchen Valley Country Park in the east but only Lower Test Reserve in the west. Also there are old records for areas to the west, between 1964 and 1981, i.e. Lord's Wood; Lordshill; Nursling and Dibden Bay.



Weasel (male left and female right)

EUROPEAN MINK (*Mustela lutreola*):-

There is one definite record of this species since 1990, this was for Lower Test Reserve. This animal was either an escapee or a deliberate release.

AMERICAN MINK (*Mustela vison*):-

Fortunately this obnoxious, naturalised, aquatic predator isn't very numerous around Southampton, although there are several mink farms in the area. It has been positively identified at Lower Test Reserve on infrequent occasions since 1990. Other Mink sightings, assumed to be of this species, have been made at twice at Victoria Country Park and occasionally in the Itchen Valley since 1990. There are also old records for Nursling GP's (1964) and Dibden Bay (1965).

DOMESTIC FERRET (*Mustela fero*):-

The only definite local record of this mammal is for Dibden Bay (1977). It is assumed that this was a random escape from captivity. The wild cousin of the Ferret, namely the **POLECAT** (*Mustela putorius*) is, however, spreading into Hampshire from the NW but has not, to our knowledge, been recorded in the Southampton area as yet.

OTTER (*Lutra lutra*):-

The Otter is a native, aquatic predator which used to be quite common in the Southampton area. One local naturalist frequently saw them along one stretch of river close to the city up to 1955, but not since. At about the same time populations crashed across Britain to a very low level due to a combination of factors. Strong legal protection and release projects have brought them back to the Southampton area since 1993 but the future is still very uncertain for them. Signs of Otters are now regularly seen in one area. Between 1955 and 1993 there were two records, probably of feral animals, from other sites near Southampton. These are dated 1986 and 1988.

BADGER (*Meles meles*):-

The Badger, more than any other British mammal, seems to bring out the worst in human nature. For some people it is only too easy to find reasons to kill this animal. Therefore details of specific sites cannot be

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disclosed in this account.

Historically, according to one local naturalist, Badgers were virtually unknown in the Southampton area before 1935. Then between 1968 and 1980 there were only occasional records but this may have been due to the fact that they can be difficult to see rather than scarce. Since 1980 Badgers have taken to visiting suburban gardens for easy food but since 1990 there is some evidence of a decline in numbers with the abandonment of several setts around the city. The activities of the unscrupulous and the electrification of some railways has not helped them. Currently there are known to be Badger populations around the north and the east of the city but they probably do not occur in the more built up and less wooded western and central areas.

LAGOMORPHA

RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*):-

Although the Rabbit is one of the

commonest British wild mammals it is relatively unsuited to life in cities because when an area of suitable habitat, however large, is completely surrounded by residential housing any existing Rabbit population is eventually wiped out by cats. Nevertheless a small inner city population still lives by the railway line between the central station and Millbrook and there are probably other railway-side sites around the city. Elsewhere within the city the picture is grim with no records from Southampton Common since 1959; no records at all from the Lordsdale and Shoreburs Greenways; none from central Totton since 1975 and none from Broadlands Greenway since 1986. The latter record is quite recent but may have been of an escaped domestic rabbit. Around the edge of the city, however, they are still common and widespread with populations in the Waterside area; Lower Test Reserve; the Itchen Valley; Netley Common and in the woodlands both to the north and to the SE of the city. Occasionally colour variations occur in our local

wild Rabbits. For example a ginger phase is regularly seen in the population by Test Lane, Redbridge and in 1996 an albino Rabbit was seen at Bury Farm, Marchwood.

HARE (*Lepus capensis*):-

Although Hares are still quite frequent on the open chalk country of central Hampshire they were never very numerous in the Southampton area. The only post-1990 records are for Lower Test Reserve and Shamblehurst Lane, Hedge End (1993). Also they certainly occurred regularly at Dibden Bay up to 1976 but not, apparently, since. The other area where there was a population, at least formerly, was around the NE edge of Southampton where the most recent known record was at West End in 1981. Despite its name they were unknown at Harefield, at least since 1925.

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RODENTA

GREY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*):-

This North American rodent was unknown in Southampton prior to 1959 when it was first seen on Southampton Common. Now it is probably the most frequently seen and familiar wild mammal in the city. To put it simply, where there are trees there are squirrels so these little masters of opportunity can be seen even in the Central Parks and in many inner city gardens. In the suburbs and the more wooded Greenways and parks they are probably more numerous than in woodland outside the city because they are seldom killed as pests and are becoming increasingly sophisticated raiders of garden bird feeding areas. It is easier to say where they definitely do not occur - in Southampton Water!

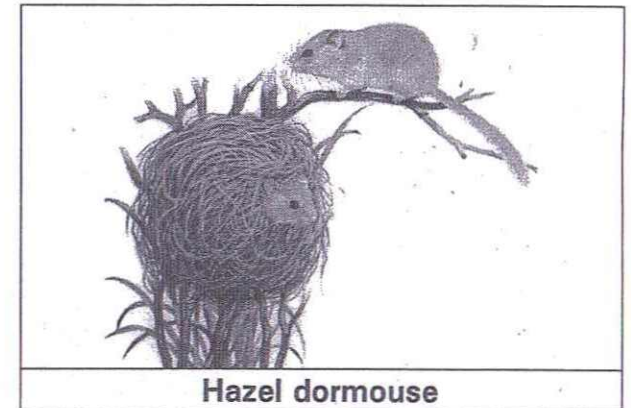
RED SQUIRREL (*Sciurus vulgaris*) - EXTINCT IN HAMPSHIRE:-

In contrast to the last species this

beautiful native rodent is now absent from the vicinity of Southampton. According to one local naturalist they were very frequent in the pine woods of Thornhill in the 1930s and prior to 1939, when he saw his last one in Harefield, they were present at Cutbush; Moorhill; West Wood and even at Bitterne Common. The exact date of the last sighting in Southampton isn't known but they were probably still on Southampton Common in 1955. It appears that the occurrence of the two species in the city didn't quite overlap so the 'reds' probably declined for reasons unrelated to the 'greys' and the latter just took their place. Red Squirrels are now completely absent from Hampshire and attempts to introduce them to Southampton Common in the 1980s were abandoned due to the failure of similar projects elsewhere. However in southern England they can still be seen on the Isle of Wight and on Brownsea Island, Dorset.

DORMOUSE (*Muscardinus avellanarius*):-

This specially protected rodent is not as rare as many people might think in Hampshire. One might be surprised to learn that they have been recorded at three sites around the edge of the city since 1988. At two of these localities they were found in their traditional habitat of Oak/Hazel woodland and, at the other, in more unusual Birch/Rhododendron scrub. It is possible that a more thorough search might lead to more discoveries of this delightful animal around the city.



Hazel dormouse

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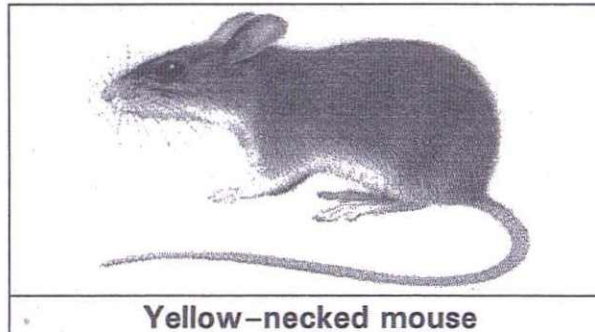
HARVEST MOUSE (*Micromys minutus*):-

Like so many other small mammals, the effects of predation by cats, limits the occurrence of this species in areas surrounded by houses. It is not surprising, therefore, that we have no records from Southampton Common since 1965. It is pleasing to note that there are still good populations at Lower Test Reserve and at Monk's Brook Greenway and other post-1988 records are from Hackett's Marsh, Bursledon and Itchen Valley Country Park. In all these locations there is suitable reed bed, sedge bed or tall grass habitat. Historically they were probably more widespread with old records up to about 1940 at Harefield.

WOOD MOUSE (*Apodemus sylvaticus*):-

According to the records the Wood Mouse is still a numerous mammal in the Southampton area and is probably the commonest small rodent. It occurs in all of the woodlands around

the edge of the city as well as in suburban gardens and in many of the Greenways. In 1986 it was certainly still present at an inner city location, namely the Rollesbrook Greenway. It also probably still occurs on Southampton Common, where it was certainly frequent in the past. Also occasional post-1980 records for such places as Aldermoor Copse; Peartree Green and Shoreburs Greenway suggest that it is more able than most small mammals to withstand heavy cat predation.



YELLOW-NECKED MOUSE (*Apodemus flavicollis*):-

This is a woodland rodent which is widespread in Hampshire and may be increasing in numbers. It has

probably been overlooked in the Southampton area. Since it enters outbuildings and even houses in the countryside it is likely to have been seen in many suburban gardens but misidentified as ordinary Wood Mouse. The only known post-1990 records are for Bassett Wood; Itchen Valley Country Park; Weston Common and, probably, Netley. There are no older records.

HOUSE MOUSE (*Mus musculus*):-

This mammal is definitely less frequent than it was in less hygienic times but still seems to occur sporadically in Southampton. The only known post-1990 records, however, are for Lower Test Reserve, Guildhall Square (1991), and very recently Portswood (1998). There are older records for inner city areas such as Portswood (1973) and 'city centre' (1970). Other previous records are for Bitterne (1970s); Hedge End (1967); Southampton Common (1965) and, more recently, Mansbridge Marsh (1986).

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BLACK RAT (*Rattus rattus*) - EXTINCT IN SOUTHAMPTON:-

Modern standards of hygiene have led to this species, a more attractive animal than its brown cousin, becoming a rarity in Britain. This century its usual habitat has been seaports and in Southampton, according to one local naturalist, it was commoner than the Brown Rat in the old sheds in Southampton Docks up to 1940. In that year these sheds were destroyed in aerial bombing raids but they may have been elsewhere since in 1968 there was a record, apparently of this species, at Millbrook Point. There are no known records since.

BROWN RAT (*Rattus norvegicus*):-

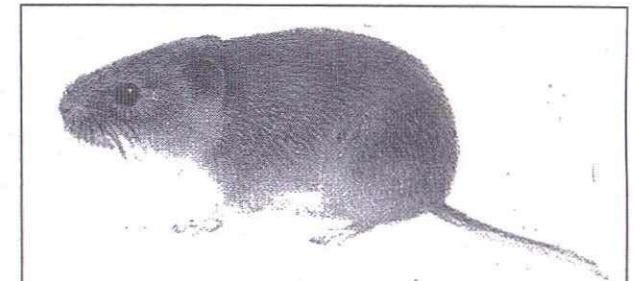
This extremely resilient and adaptable rodent still continues to exist wherever there are suitable conditions. It tends to occur in industrial premises, outhouses and sheds, abandoned buildings, rubbish tips, wasteland etc., especially where there is dumping of waste or

accumulation of litter. Currently good populations are known to exist at Riverside Park; Chessel Bay and West Wood. There are recent records from many other locations including Lower Test Reserve; Southampton Common; Swaythling; Itchen Valley Country Park; Peartree Green; Mayfield Park; around Miller's Pond and at Victoria Country Park. Unfortunately the existence of this mammal at a site cannot be welcomed thanks to the serious diseases it can carry.

BANK VOLE (*Clethrionomys glareolus*):-

The Bank Vole is primarily an animal of woodland and scrub and it seems to be quite frequent around the city. However like so many small mammals it is scarce or absent in areas completely surrounded by housing due to cat predation. Nevertheless there are post-1980 records for Coxford Copse; Southampton Old Cemetery (1983) and Weston Common. Also sites around the edge of the city where it has definitely been seen since 1990 include Lower Test Reserve; Lord's Wood; Fitzroy

Close at Bassett; Itchen Valley Country Park; Peewit Hill at Bursledon; West Wood and Victoria Country Park.

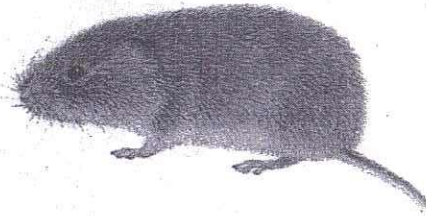


Bank vole (adult)

FIELD VOLE (*Microtus agrestis*):-

This is an animal of more open grassland rather than woodland so its distribution around the city is somewhat different than that of the Bank Vole. This rodent may be more prone to being wiped out by cat predation than is the Bank Vole since there are no known records since 1980 within the city in areas surrounded by housing.

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Field vole

Formerly they occurred at Bassett Wood (up to 1969; Maybush (up to 1973); Bitterne Allotments (1975) and on Southampton Common (up to 1976). It is probable that they still occur on parts of Southampton Common as well as in allotment gardens, on the verges of the M27 and along operating railway lines. Unlike the Bank Vole there appear to be no records for the woodland areas to the north of the city but in the west there are post-1980 records for Lower Test Reserve and Dibden Bay and in the east for the Itchen Valley; Netley Common, West Wood and Victoria Country Park.

WATER VOLE (*Arvicola terrestris*):-

This is Southampton's only aquatic rodent and fortunately it is still quite

frequent locally despite serious declines elsewhere. In the case of the Water Vole cat predation is probably a less significant problem than with other small mammals but the presence of Mink can often spell doom for them at a site. Presently the Water Vole seems to be widespread in the Itchen Valley area and present at Lower Test Reserve. They might still exist in the Lordsdale and Shoreburs Greenways too. In the former area there was evidence of them at Aldermoor Copse (1987) and, probably, the Hollybrook at Bassett (1986); at the latter Greenway they were recorded at both Miller's Pond and in Mayfield Park in 1988. Prior to 1980 there are records for the River Test between Nursling and Testwood; Nursling GPs; Dibden Bay and Southampton Common. They are unlikely to still occur at the latter site.

ARTIODACTYLA

RED DEER (*Cervus elephus*):-

This is Britain's largest wild mammal and is native to this country. There

are at least three well established populations in the New Forest and when wandering stags from here turn up in the Southampton area they tend to cause a sensation. In the winter 1966/67 two stags took up residence in the West End to Hedge End area for several weeks. More recently, in Easter 1986, a stag was disturbed from a Thornhill garden and was followed through Sholing before becoming stranded in mud at Woolston! Eventually the animal was captured and safely returned to the New Forest.

[FALLOW DEER (*Dama dama*):-]

A doubtful record exists of tracks of this species being seen at Nightingale Wood at Rownhams in 1968. This species is the commonest deer in the New Forest but is a highly sedentary animal so if the identification is correct then presumably the individual concerned was an escape from captivity or deliberate release. Alternatively an error of identification could have occurred but nothing can now be proved either way.

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ROE DEER (*Capreolus capreolus*):-

This is much the commonest wild deer in Hampshire as a whole and is a native, woodland animal. According to one elderly local naturalist it has increased in recent years and was a rarity in the Southampton area before 1956. Now it is common all around the edge of the city with records from many locations since 1990. Areas where they are particularly often seen include the Nursling area; Lord's Wood; Hut Wood; Hardmoor Copse; Itchen Valley County Park; Telegraph Wood and Peewit Hill. Since Roe Deer are seldom persecuted as pests around the city the main limiting factor in their occurrence, given that the habitat is suitable, is disturbance by dogs. Therefore they are less frequent in areas that have become dog walks and mostly absent or of only occasional occurrence in the open spaces actually within the city. For example we know of no records for either Southampton Common or Hum Hole in Bitterne. However signs of them were seen recently at some

sites such as Coxford Copse (1994); Peartree Green (up to 1993) and Chessel Bay (up to 1993). The most unusual record, however, was of one running down a suburban street in Bitterne in 1988!

MUNTJAC (*Muntiacus reevesi*):-

This is the smallest wild deer to be seen in Hampshire and the most elusive. It is a native of China and was introduced to Bedfordshire in 1909. Since 1945 it has become well established in the Midlands, East Anglia and in the Chilterns. It spread south to the Southampton area around 1980 but remains less common in Hampshire than it is further north probably due to the high incidence of Roe Deer. The first record actually within the city was for Southampton Common (1983) when an individual was seen which may have been disturbed from the woodland area north of the city by the M27 construction work. Since then there are records for Lord's Wood (1994); Peartree Green (pre-1992); Weston Common (1994) and

Peewit Hill (1998).

PINNIPEDIA

COMMON SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*):-

Seals, of two different species, have occasionally been reported in the Solent, Southampton Water and in the River Test and, despite its name, the Common Seal has been the rarer of the two. Nevertheless it was a regular occurrence to see this species in Southampton Water in the 1960s and there was a young animal in the River Test in 1979. None recorded since.

GREY SEAL (*Halichoerus grypus*):-

As for the Common Seal, sightings of this species were regular in Southampton Water from 1960 to 1969. Then in December 1981 one was regular in the River Test and was seen off the container dock and upriver as far as the Salmon Pool at Testwood. Even now Grey Seals are occasionally seen in the winter in the Solent. Surprisingly we have no

STATUS OF MAMMALS IN THE SOUTHAMPTON AREA

records of either seal species in the River Itchen.

CETACEA

[HARBOUR PORPOISE (*Phocoena phocoena*)]:-

Sadly this species has become a rare sight in British waters in recent years. The only local record was of one in the Solent off Hillhead in 1958. Even that sighting wasn't in the immediate vicinity of the city.

[DOLPHIN]

The only record was of two in Southampton Water off Hythe in June 1958. It is likely that these were Bottle Nosed Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*).

TABLE ONE

The table on the following page illustrates our current records for mammals in Southampton. This information is not necessarily complete and there are some gaps –

especially, for instance, Southampton Common. Also some species are not mentioned in the table if it is not appropriate to do so.

TABLE ONE

[illegible]

STATUS OF MAMMALS IN THE SOUTHAMPTON AREA

CONCLUSION

In total 44 species of wild mammal have been recorded in the Southampton area since 1950, although in four cases the records cannot be verified. About 31 species are to be considered permanent residents in and around the city and most, if not all of these species, actually breed. We seem to have three particularly rare and interesting species living in or near the city, namely Grey Long Eared Bat, Otter and Dormouse.

Some species seem to be commoner now than they were in the past such as Fox, Badger and Roe Deer for example. Also the Grey Squirrel has colonized the city in the last forty years and Yellow-necked Mouse and Muntjac have moved into the edges of the city more recently. Otters have returned to the area after being virtually absent for forty years, some species of bats probably occur but may be overlooked and wild Polecat will probably appear near Southampton soon.

On the debit side we seem to have lost the Red Squirrel and the Black Rat and, apart from the occasional Grey Seal in the winter, Southampton Water seems to be too polluted for most sea mammals. Most other mammals have declined to some extent due to the effects of ever increasing development, especially new housing development and the cats, dogs and general disturbance that goes with it. Species which seem to have declined most in the last 25 years are Pygmy Shrew, Stoat, Hare and House Mouse.

A few species seem to have coped particularly well with inner city life, these include Pipistrelle Bat, Fox, Grey Squirrel and Brown Rat. Most other species are absent from the city centre except in sites such as railway sidings, allotments and neglected wasteland where certain species may still live in small isolated populations. Such species may include Common Shrew, Rabbit, Wood Mouse, Bank Vole and Field Vole. The suburbs have richer faunas and may be

favoured by certain species such as Hedgehog, Badger, Wood Mouse and some species of bats. However most of the suburban Greenways that are enclosed by housing are poor in small mammals fauna due to cat, and possibly, fox and squirrel predation.

Most species are commonest in the woods and open areas around the edge of the city where populations of some mammals species are often higher than further afield due to lack of persecution by gamekeepers etc. Also, fortunately, there is still a lot of habitat for wildlife in the river valleys either side of the city and this favours most of the species that can live elsewhere as well as the Mole, Water Shrew, Daubenton's Bat, Otter, Harvest Mouse and Water Vole. Southampton is fortunate to have such a rich assortment of wild mammals.